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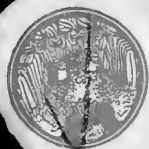
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Every Man Has His Price

A Play :: by Luke North





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Every Man Has His Price

A Play In Four Acts

By Luke North, pseud

James Hartness Griffin



The Gorden Press: Los Angeles

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1910

One Hundred Copies Privately Printed
(not published)

220 N. Hancock St., Los Angeles, Calif.

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

HENRY ARVIN

—HIS HEAD } Visualizations of Henry Arvin's
—HIS HEART } mental and emotional natures.

ALBERT DUTTON GRANE

MR. BLAND

MR. JOHNSON

MISS SARA MANNING

MISS MARY LAMBSON

THEIR PORTRAITS

HENRY ARVIN is just turning thirty—of middle stature, with studious, thoughtful, intellectual face and manner. He is very, neatly, but quietly dressed—hardly an ideal melodramatic hero, yet a hearty, free-spoken, gentlemanly "good fellow."

—HIS HEAD (the visualization of ARVIN's mental nature) is a noticeably older man with a decided sprinkling of gray in his hair and deep lines of thought about his eyes and forehead; he is a trifle taller and straighter perhaps and carries himself with much more conscious dignity, but his voice and manner are about the same as ARVIN's and his attire is identical—save for a few inches on the length of his coat for dignity's sake. He is always calm and collected and tho sometimes a trifle insinuating or even sarcastic in speech, his face and bearing remain imperturbable.

—HIS HEART (the visualization of ARVIN's emotional nature) appears sometimes older, but more often markedly younger than ARVIN. His manner, face and voice change rapidly in keeping with the situations and the lines, portraying all emotions, from the loftiest aspirations to the meanest passions. He is dressed the same (except that his coat is a few inches shorter) and when in repose he is a somewhat younger and a trifle shorter duplicate of his principal.

ALBERT DUTTON GRANE is of uncertain age, but not younger than fifty. He is displeasing to the eye and the ear, tho it is difficult to say just wherein his repulsiveness to civilized standards begins or ends. The trickling evidences of the tobacco in

his mouth could be forgiven were his garb honest and his manner genuine. He wears a silk hat, gaudy trousers, and a Prince Albert that almost fits him. His black hair has lost the dye at its roots and carries an excessive burden of tonic. There is more than enough pomade on his mustaches—and always a crumb or a spot on his brand new coat. His shoes and his voice squeak, his verbs wobble, and his hands tho soft are not quite clean. He is a "self-made man" somewhat botched in the making. He would like to be pompous and grand, but doesn't know how. He tries to combine the gruff, piratical sincerity of Collis P. Huntington with the garb and demeanor of Adolph Sutro and the pomposity of Leland Stanford—lacking, of course, the breadth of vision, personal honesty, and absence of pettiness which enabled these men to be great.

In his own way, however, he is a type, and a man of some strength. By the rule of the attraction of opposites he can be imagined to have a certain fascination for a refined and sensitive woman. But his contact with such a woman would seem irreparably to soil her. One could pity his mistress or his wife, but scarcely love.

MR. BLAND is a very tall man and very lean and full of joints. His face is smooth, long, and bony. His head is bald. His voice is magnificent—deep, clear, resonant, and impressive. There is only one other man in San Francisco so superbly and so fashionably attired.

MISS SARA MANNING is a beautiful, refined, well-dressed young woman. Her attire is fashionable and expensive, but by no means showy. She is all that the heroine of a melo-drama ought to be.

MISS MARY LAMBSON, stenographer, is a trim little woman of slight build, very neat in appearance—rather comely upon the whole, but by no means conspicuously so. She is sprightly and demure, witty and thoughtful—not an unlovable woman, but one to be valued more for her rare intelligence than her person.

THE ALTER EGOS

To avoid encumbering the text with stage directions, let it be remembered that the Alter Egos of HENRY ARVIN (HIS HEAD and HIS HEART) are seen

only by himself and the audience, and their exits and entrances are timed with this fact always in view.

ARVIN accepts their presence not as concrete actualities, but rather as shadowy and insubstantial existences which he knows to be very real and permanent parts of himself. They are to him as his invisible ethereal doubles. Only to the audience are they real and substantial entities, and they come and go practically unnoticed by all but the audience. ARVIN's conversation with them is as of a man talking to himself.

Suppositiously they are momentary visualizations produced by the strength of the human struggle they depict—forms created in the ether by power of the thought or feeling of the moment. They come from nowhere and disappear as mysteriously.

Actually, as the audience cannot fail to observe, they take refuge behind the screens or in the invisible wings of the wall. Without so seeming, they are careful at all times not to show themselves too conspicuously when anyone other than ARVIN is present. At the opportune moment they are at his elbow, right and left respectively, whispering their counsel, suggesting or arguing the point—and their exits are equally guarded and opportune.

THE TIME

February 22d of the Year 1894

THE SCENE

The action of the entire play is in the spacious and comfortably-furnished office of ALBERT DUTTON GRANE on the fourth floor of the old Flood Building in San Francisco. The single entrance to the room is a door rear center whose upper half is of ground glass on which is painted (in reverse to the audience) the name of the proprietor, beneath which is "Don't Knock" and "Walk In." Above the varnished oak wainscoting the walls are calcimined a very pale blue. From the ceiling, about

center, hangs an elaborately ornamental brass chandelier, the gas jets of which represent candles.

There is a marble washstand in the right rear corner, partly hidden by a screen to the right, and next to the washstand on the right wall is a clothes closet. Further down the right wall is a large white marble mantel and open fire-place. Over the mantel is a big French bevel mirror set in the wall. Slabs of soft coal are burning in the grate, and a polished brass scuttle of the same stands to the lower side. Before the fire-place is a huge leather-covered chair, and a stool in front of it.

Bisecting the room in the center and almost making two apartments of it is a long heavy oak table, to the upper end of which is a Japanese screen. Four chairs are at the table, two on each side. On the upper end of the table is a typewriter, and beside it a large calendar; in the center is an immense vase of golden poppies, the first of the season, and on the lower end is the telephone.

To the left lower is HENRY ARVIN's desk with a swivel chair in front and a Japanese screen to the upper end of it. Beyond this is another desk and screen and chair, and diagonally across the left upper corner is a leather-covered lounge. Along the rear wall are filing cases and to the right is a combination safe of respectable dimensions.

There is a generous bunch of violets on top of ARVIN's desk, blue and red lupins and some nuggets and mineral specimens on the mantel. For its day it was a luxurious broker's and promoter's office—a type of the kind in which often met and plotted the Floods, Crockers and Mackeys of the latter days of California's declining romance.

THE FIRST ACT

As the curtain rises MARY LAMBSON enters. She doffs her hat and wraps, placing them in the closet, primps a bit at the mirror over the fire-place, pokes the fire, and does a variety of useless and inane things until the last auditor is seated, the last hat removed, and there is quiet in the house. Then she seats herself at the typewriter and the click of the keys is the cue for the action of the play to begin.

HENRY ARVIN (*enters brusquely—cheerily, but abstractedly*). 'Morning, Miss Lambson. (*Goes straight to his desk and opens it, laying his hat and coat on chair of first desk as he passes.*)

MARY. Good morning, Mister Arvin. You are late.

ARVIN. Is that so unusual?

MARY. Your tardiness is resolving itself into punctuality.

ARVIN (*busy at desk*). As sins resolve themselves into virtues—

MARY. Do they?

ARVIN. Surely. Hadn't you noticed—in your reading?

MARY. And virtues into sins?

ARVIN. We are using the terms interchangeably now.

MARY. Why use them at all, since they have lost their meaning?

ARVIN. The old forms just hang on. We need a new vocabulary of morality.

MARY. Or a new morality——?

ARVIN. Or none——

MARY. We have that already.

ARVIN. And our conduct remains about the same.

MARY. Abnormal—yes.

ARVIN (*still busy at desk*). Conduct and morality never were very closely associated.

MARY. Your remarks are in the masculine gender?

ARVIN. O, yes—women are outside the moral question. (*Turning.*) Mary, you are the cleverest woman—why have I not fallen desperately in love with you?

MARY. You forget that woman is the selective creature—or don't you read Shaw? And I have not chosen to select you. (*Her face shows the untruth*

of this assertion, but her voice is light and firm, and he does not see her face. Perhaps he would not have noticed if he had, for he is intensely absorbed in his own affairs and in himself.)

ARVIN (*pensively, going a step toward her*). You are a philosopher, Mary. Tell me, have you ever stood outside of your own nature, apart from yourself, and watched the internal struggle—looked on at yourself—approvingly or otherwise?

MARY. That is peculiarly a masculine trick.

ARVIN. Doesn't a woman ever become a spectator of herself—stand aloof and view her thoughts and feelings apart from herself?

MARY. No. Women are neither egotistical nor analytical enough for that. Women don't cut themselves up into pieces. A woman is her whole self, no matter what her mood.

ARVIN. But *you* analyze, Mary. You have a wonderful head.

MARY. And that is why you—(*she does not finish the sentence, but if she did it would read, "do not love me."*) What I do is not to the point. Things are as they are. Women do not analyze. If they did men would cease to be analysts—or—

ARVIN. Or the attraction of opposites would cease. I suppose you are right. If men and women were mentally the same there would be nothing but the bodily attraction between them.

MARY. There might still be the spiritual difference. There is something beyond the mind—

ARVIN. The Will—the controlling element—

MARY. And a woman's passive will that bows to things—and a man's active will that rebels and tries to shape things—

ARVIN. Would make the most powerful attraction imaginable. And I suppose it does enter more or less into all the sex relations.

MARY. Decidedly less, I should say. We live on the outside of life entirely—particularly you men that analyze. Analysis is only a mental process. Women are often profound—more introspective upon the whole than man.

ARVIN. But they haven't reached the mental plane of self-analysis—or they have reached beyond it. Which is it?

MARY. Mostly the former—but not always.

ARVIN. You do not flatter your sex.

MARY. I respect it too highly. That is for men to do—when they are not analyzing—themselves.

ARVIN (*more seriously*). It isn't such a pleasant thing.

MARY. I would like to peep in some time and see you at it. Are you taken often?

ARVIN (*shuddering, earnestly*). It becomes a vice. How the elements in one can war—how they torture and rend! Be thankful that you are a woman, Mary, if that saves you from the struggle of self—from the struggle of conflicting and warring desires.

MARY. It is the human elements warring in you. They never can agree among themselves. That more than human which you are, must calm and lead them.

ARVIN. The Will?

MARY. Yes, the Will—perhaps.

ARVIN. But they becloud it, smother it—or creep in unawares when the Will is passive. They seize the Will and try to force it to their purposes—to their conflicting purposes. One cannot always be positive and watchful.

MARY. Not if one has moods—which one has no business to have—

ARVIN. Then life would be colorless.

MARY. The true life of strength is beyond color.

ARVIN. And beyond usefulness in this our world of form and color.

MARY. Yes—and therefore external life is always a struggle.

ARVIN. And yet its greatest struggles are not external. (*MARY smiles and nods assent.*) O, I could tell of struggles that rob days of peace and nights of rest! When reason wars with feeling—it isn't a question of morality—but why do I talk like this to you, Mary?

MARY. Because we are friends (*gives him her hand*)—and—(*with an effort that he does not see*)—and not lovers. Because we understand each other. (*Lightly*) Go on—men are interesting creatures.

ARVIN. Often at my right stands reason.

(*HIS HEAD enters softly and slowly approaches.*) He is always cold, unfeeling, unmoral. He would reduce all life to axioms and syllogisms—would weigh and measure every impulse, from the lowest passion to the loftiest aspiration. If his counsel saves from vice or folly, it often shuts the door on reality, and leads to nothing more than dull conformity. He assumes to guide life and yet cannot answer its simplest problems. He cannot tell me Why or Who I am, or what the Game of Life is all about. He leads from much that is true and uplifting, and from all that is bright and alluring.

And then the brighter and darker side of me comes—the colors, tints, shadings of life—how they blend!

(His HEART enters silently and slowly approaches)
This emotional, passional, aspirational part, cameleon like, stands out bold and clear as another image of myself sometimes. And then I am urged unreasoningly, to the heights—or to the depths. I can see them there at either side of me often. They are like living, breathing actualities—thought forms and emotional images of myself.

The ALTER EGOS withdraw. As MARY instinctively follows ARVIN's gaze she catches a glimpse of them as they disappear, and shudders, almost ready to believe she has seen mental images.

MARY. And when they battle—

ARVIN. Then hell becomes reality.

MARY. Then you suffer, Henry. Then you, the real Henry Arvin, are ground fine and polished and made strong. . . . (Eagerly) But you conquer and use them? That is the true glory of life! You conquer them, and rule them—tell me that you do!

ARVIN (*has regained his composure and is rather abashed at his impulsiveness*). Now you are serious, Mary, which breaks our first rule that both of us never shall be serious at the same time.

MARY. Ah, yes. I forgot.

ARVIN (*lightly*). Your memory is entirely feminine, Miss Lambson. I was reading about your sect the other evening.

MARY (*drily*). Yes—in the Book of Life? She sent those violets.

ARVIN. Did she? (MARY puts a bunch of them in his button hole.) Thank you.

MARY. She's worth all your blushes—and more—But you were reading—?

ARVIN. Yes—in the book of death, I should say—that one of the young German savant who committed suicide as soon as he had written it.

MARY. Sorbinger, you mean.

ARVIN. That is the name. You know everything, Mary.

MARY. I wish I didn't know so much. . . . But—he wrote well—about men. You found it interesting?

ARVIN (*busy at his desk*). No, about women. Yes, intensely interesting—and instructive.

MARY (*busy at typewriter*). No doubt.

ARVIN. Morality, says Sorbinger, is a matter of memory—of continuity of thought—you see?

MARY. Perhaps—but—

ARVIN. And women having no real memory of sequence, have therefore no morality.

MARY. And then he awoke and killed himself.

ARVIN. But it is true—and here is the case in point (*turning toward her*). You have forgotten to turn your calendar—you are living in yesterday. It is the 22d—Washington's birthday—and we don't work on holidays in this office. You ought to be home with your mother, or out with her somewhere. The hills are full of wild flowers. It is a case of filial neglect—a breach of the fifth commandment. You are a creature without memory—*sans* morality—in other words, a woman. Am I right?

MARY (*she has turned the calendar—mockingly*). The poor working girl pleads guilty, your honor—with a recommendation for mercy. (*Rising*) But you are working?

ARVIN. Just to sort over a few papers. I looked in chiefly to guard your memory and your morals, Miss Lambson (*busy at desk again*).

MARY. Your thoughtfulness—and memory—are only partially equalled by your morality—and conceit, Mr. Arvin.

ARVIN. Not another word, Mary Lambson. Go home and tell your mother how unmoral you are.

MARY (*putting on her hat*). Not even immoral?

ARVIN. No—just unmoral.

MARY (*at the door*). Well, if your Alter Egos get after you and begin to grind, just ring me up on the 'phone, and I'll come and separate you.

ARVIN. I'm much more likely to call a policeman, Mary. Really, that's what I should have done, instead of bothering your poor kind head with my troubles. It wasn't the thing to do—

MARY. Don't say that, please. It takes away all the (*turning aside*) sweetness of it.

ARVIN. Men are self-centered—that is why they are brutal to women. And their wits are not nimble enough. I think women are better creatures than men, Mary.

MARY (*sighs, but speaks lightly*). Both better and worse, Henry. Give her my love.

ARVIN. I will.

MARY. Adios. *Goes.*

ARVIN. Good-bye. See you in the morning. (*Turns to his work and becomes absorbed in it.*)

HEART *enters, reaches for the violets and holds them invitingly for ARVIN to catch their fragrance.*

ARVIN. (*takes the flowers unconsciously and replaces them*). In Life's Garden I have found the fairest flower. She is the answer to the prayer of my years. I am content.

HEAD (*appearing*). It is not well for man to be content. He must echo Faust—

And when thou hearest me say to the swiftly-
fleeing moment,
"Stay yet awhile, thou art lovely!" then mayst
I die—

And whether one echo it or not, such is the Way of
Things, and of Growth.

ARVIN. Be it so—we will grow and serve together.
(*He sits musing, in silence.*)

HEAD. But you have loved before.

ARVIN. Not like this.

HEART. Not so worthily—not a soul loftier than
your own. She is life's ideal.

ARVIN *smiles approval*.

HEAD. I wonder why she left you so suddenly last
night when Grane appeared.

ARVIN. Why should I question, or care?

HEART (*bends low and whispers*). She loves you.
That is enough. She is noble and true.

HEAD. She had a secret to tell you—you should
have listened.

ARVIN (*dreamily*). Time enough for that.

HEART (*to HEAD*). All he cared for was to hear
her softly confess—"I love you!"

HEAD (*to HEART*). But he knows so little about
her. Old Grane is her uncle—

HEART. Yes. Her terrible misfortune.

HEAD. He will not approve.

HEART. That will be his misfortune. It will make
no difference.

ARVIN. Love will conquer.

HEAD. That sounds well—and popular.

HEART. And it's true.

HEAD. Is anything true?

ARVIN. Love is true.

HEART. Love is true—if you pay its full price.

HEAD. Love is the most expensive thing in the
world. For true love you will have to pay about
everything else in life that is worth while.

HEART. It is cheap, even at that.

ARVIN. Nothing else in life is worth while. I
have paid—and will pay more, gladly—let the price
be what it will. (*There is a pause.*)

HEAD (*cautiously*). You have known her only a
month.

HEART (*swiftly*). An instant is eternity to love!

ARVIN. Eternity! I have seen it in the depths of
her eyes—depths that reveal the memory of past ex-
istences! In her smile is the promise of futurity—in
her voice the music of life. To me she is the cosmic
woman.

HEAD. But is it safe for one to grasp and hold

in his arms the ideal—to say “There is no more”?

HEART. Why question life? One is a fool to take less than it offers.

HEAD. There is a higher love than that of man for woman.

ARVIN. Hand-in-hand we shall find it. (*Turning to his work*) But this won't do.

HEART (*whispers*). You will see her this afternoon.

ARVIN. I promised Grane I would put these foreign papers in the safe. Why is he so anxious about them?

HEART (*suggestingly*). Something crooked here.

ARVIN. Yes, there is some deviltry in this Relton estate case out of which Grane expects to become a millionaire.

HEAD (*cautioning*). That is not your affair. Grane's motives are his own. All court cases are crooked.

ARVIN. O, that is too sweeping—not all.

HEAD. Where there is honesty and fairness there is no need for the courts.

ARVIN. That is an unglittering generality.

HEAD. Your salary is substantial.

ARVIN. Yes—the salary suits my complexion rather well. (*A letter falls open*) What is this? Sara—O, Sara Relton. Thank God, it is not Sara Manning. I would hate to have her name mixed—(*involuntarily he glances over the letter*) So! to Sara Relton belong these millions that Albert Dutton Grane expects to harvest. And she alive—he knows her whereabouts—(*reading*) represented as deceased. God! what a piece of villainy!

HEAD. Don't get excited. It is not your concern. The probate records are replete with such melodramas. You have no business prying into these personal letters.

ARVIN. True enough. And in this case the effect follows the cause quickly. I can't take any more of Grane's money. I must leave here at once.

HEAD. Don't be rash. Think it over—reason it out.

ARVIN. Not a moment will I think of it. With her image in my heart, my hands must be clean.

HEAD. Ah, very Quixotic. She ought to hear you.

ARVIN. Quixotic it may be. I shall leave at once. (*Turns to finish his work.*) I know too much. . .

. . . But that name—Sara—

HEAD. Merely a coincidence.

ARVIN (*busy*). I suppose so.

HEART. She loves you.

ARVIN (*smiling, pausing a moment, then continuing his work*). I have her love—that is enough.

We will leave here—go off somewhere—anywhere—

HEAD. Just so. Buy an estate in the country—an orange grove at Riverside—a castle on Lake Como. A month's salary is enough for almost anything.

ARVIN (*resolutely*). O, I'll work, and win for her! I could not go to her with soiled hands.

HEAD. Think it over. Reason it out.

ARVIN. Keep still—that is settled.

HEART (*whispering*). She loves you. Be worthy.

ARVIN (*leans back a moment musingly*). All else is unimportant. That love, I'll keep it white and unstained as it came to us—as it is. She —

(*The door opens and ALBERT DUTTON GRANE enters.*) You are earlier than I expected, Mr. Grane. I have not finished—

GRANE. Never mind that now. I want to talk to you about another thing. This nonsense has gone far enough—

ARVIN (*rises, then checks himself and speaks mildly*). But I am not your lackey, Mr. Grane.

GRANE (*oblivious*). I want to tell you about that young woman I seen you with last night.

ARVIN (*hotly, yet repressed*). We will not discuss that, Mr. Grane.

GRANE. O, yes, we will. She is—

ARVIN (*threatening*). Not another word!

GRANE. I'm her *gardeeen*.

ARVIN. She is of age.

GRANE. Well, you ain't going to marry her. You can make sure of that.

ARVIN. That is not for you to decide.

GRANE. I'm going to decide it, tho. I know this young woman pretty tolerably well.

ARVIN. Unfortunately.

GRANE. She ain't what you think she is. Her name ain't—

ARVIN (*too hastily*). Is it Relton?

GRANE (*guardedly*). I mean she ain't the kind of woman a man marries. I guess you know—(*insinuatingly*)

ARVIN (*repressing himself by great effort; takes hat and coat and makes for the door*). This is your office, Mr. Grane, but there are certain things you can't say to me here, or anywhere. I am going.

GRANE (*plants himself in front of the door*). Not till you hear what I got to say. (*Then hurriedly*) I know all about her—I'm the father of her child.

ARVIN (*stunned*). What! It's a lie!

GRANE (*coolly*). Wait a minute. She's been my mistress since she was eighteen. Of course, that's on the quiet. When you're moving in Nob Hill so-

ciety you don't let on about them things, you know. And my wife—she'd kick up a hell of a rumpus. O, Sara's a nice girl, but even if I was free—it ain't just the thing in our set to marry your mistress, you—

HEART (*has appeared behind ARVIN, livid with rage, his hands clinched his eyes flaring*). Kill him!

Before GRANE has finished ARVIN advances upon him threateningly and with such determination in his face and manner that GRANE takes fright and makes a hurried exit. ARVIN follows him closely, HIS HEART behind him calling in terrible rage:

HEART. Kill him! Kill him!

As GRANE disappears thru the door ARVIN hurriedly locks it, as tho to keep himself from following GRANE. As ARVIN turns from the door HIS HEART reaches it and in great rage thrusts himself upon it and for a moment storms to get at GRANE. Balked of his prey, he finally subsides and disappears.

ARVIN (*walks unsteadily to his desk and buries his face in his hands. Presently the telephone rings—he does not hear it. There is a knock on the door, which he does not heed. The incessant ringing of the telephone, however, finally rouses him. He goes over to the table and answers it*). This is Mr. Arvin—Holdt & Reech?—can't you postpone till tomorrow? I am leaving here. Me—personally—well, I suppose so, if you come at once. I am going very soon. Good-bye. (*Returning to his desk he ties up papers, takes a bunch of them over to safe, opens it by combination, deposits papers, and locks safe. On his way back there is a knock on the door. He opens it abstractedly and SARA MANNING enters. He is surprised, checks his impulsive step toward her—greeted her silently, bowing—then impulsively*): It is not true, Sara—what Grane said—it is not true? (*Scans her eagerly*) Say it is not true. Say it is all a black and hideous lie! My love! My world! Say it is a lie! I—God! you do not speak!

SARA. I wanted to tell you last night. You would not listen. You had my heart, my love—that was enough, you said. Nothing could matter if we loved each other. There could be no past for love. Is—it—so—different—now?

ARVIN. The whole world is different now.

SARA. I am not changed.

ARVIN. Life itself is changed.

SARA. Love was all sufficient, you said. I leaned on your love—on my own—on our love. And now—is not love enough?

ARVIN. My love is dead. I did not know.

SARA. O! (*falls into chair at table and buries her face in her hands.*)

The door opens and a stranger stands on the threshold as the Curtain descends.

END OF ACT ONE

THE SECOND ACT

As the curtain rises SARA MANNING passes out and MR. BLAND enters. Self-absorbed, she scarcely notices him, and out of deference for her evident grief he refrains from scrutinizing her. When she is gone ARVIN closes the door and listlessly motions his visitor to a seat. BLAND sits at table near the typewriter. ARVIN is in his swivel chair at his desk.

BLAND. I am the confidential agent of the law firm of Holdt & Reech, sir, the attorneys who represent the English claimants to the estate of Herbert Relton deceased. You may recall that I had the pleasure of meeting you in court the day the argument was made on the demurrer to the amended complaint. Pardon me, but you are quite pale, sir. I trust you are not unwell, tho it would hardly be strange if you were indisposed. Almost everybody has an attack of something or other just now, it seems. These winds and the evening fogs—so early this year. In your case, however, I trust it is only a slight cold and that we shall see you entirely recovered in a few days, sir.

ARVIN (*who has scarcely heard*). Thanks—but as to any business—?

BLAND. Certainly, sir, certainly. I may begin by saying that it concerns you very personally.

ARVIN. I think you are mistaken. It cannot interest me if it refers to Mr. Grane's affairs. I am

about to leave here. If you could call tomorrow and see him—

BLAND. That is impossible, Mr. Arvin. I will be perfectly frank with you and come to the point at once.

ARVIN. Do, please.

BLAND. You have certain papers in your possession—depositions and letters from England, just received. These would be of great service to the English claimants. I am here to negotiate with you, Mr. Arvin, for the—ah—that is, for the transfer of those papers.

ARVIN (*his troubled brain has not caught up with the drift of things*). But they are the property of Mr. Grane. He will be here tomorrow. I am not an interested party in this matter. It would—(*but now the light dawns and he straightens up and takes notice*).

BLAND. Quite true, Mr. Arvin, as you say, I was leading to that. I have not come unprepared to make certain monetary concessions to you that will, I trust, be a sufficient inducement—or shall I say, that will sufficiently reimburse you—for—for—

ARVIN. For turning thief. I understand you. Go on.

BLAND. Why, not that, my good sir, not that. You take the matter too seriously by far. Such transactions are very common in probate matters these days. I could cite many precedents—but you are probably familiar with them yourself. Mr. Grane has no moral right to these documents.

ARVIN. As to that, I am in no way informed or concerned—

HEAD (*appears*). Don't be rash. Hear him.

BLAND (*ingratiatingly*). To be sure, to be sure. Yet as you are about to become disassociated with the case. . . . The ends of justice would be furthered. . . . Now, if—ah—say a thousand dollars would be of service to you?

ARVIN *is silent—his face is partly turned from*
BLAND.

HEART *approaches, a leer on his lips and a lustful gleam in his eyes.*

BLAND (*softly*). Would five thousand dollars be an inducement—(*aside*) There's a bad set to the lower jaw.

ARVIN *is silent—he is hearing another voice.*

HEART. Love is an empty word, but lust is real. Take her as she is—here is the means—and feast your senses.

HEAD. There is a steamer leaving for Australia in the morning.

BLAND. The attorneys on our side have but scant

funds at their disposal, Mr. Arvin, but I presume they would not stop at ten thousand.

HEAD. That is a competency in some countries.

HEART. Here is fate at your door. Forget the ideal in the languors of her arms. Those matchless curves of her soft flesh! How she lures!

BLAND (*anxiously and simply*). Fifteen thousand.

HEART. Here is ease and comfort, and a beautiful woman. Snatch the joys before you.

HEAD. You could read, study, travel—the intellectual life and freedom from poverty.

ARVIN *is still silent*.

BLAND (*desperately and finally*). Say twenty thousand, then?

HEAD. That would buy a villa in Southern Italy, or make you rich in Japan.

HEART. You won't be satisfied till you have had her. Take her—and leave her when you tire of her. Why scruple? Take him up, quick!

ARVIN (*turning in his chair*). Go on, Mr.—

BLAND. Bland, sir. Really I can go no farther, Mr. Arvin, without consulting my firm. However, I shall be at my office at any hour, prepared to fulfill to the letter the offer as it now stands.

HEAD. Don't act rashly. Think it over. Reason it out.

BLAND. Should you conclude, Mr.—

ARVIN (*rising suddenly*). There is the door, sir!
(*Goes to door and holds it open.*)

BLAND (*going, expeditiously*). Very well, sir, I bid you good day.

ARVIN (*closes door and returns to his desk*). A few moments more now and I am thru with this stage of my life. Shall I do him the decency to leave a note? I had better—it may save questions and close the matter definitely. (*Writes, puts note in envelope and leaves it on the table near typewriter. Then he gets his coat and hat. He hears someone fumbling at the lock. Opens the door, revealing MARY taking her key out.*)

MARY. No wonder my key wouldn't work. It seems that you are doing all the work in this building today.

ARVIN. The door wasn't locked.

MARY. It should have been. Not another office open. The elevator is dead. I had to walk up.

ARVIN. But why did you return? Can't you take a holiday and get some fresh air?

MARY. Mother has one of her sick spells. She's the most delightful invalid—simply insists on being left alone. So I came down to write some letters—

in reach of the 'phone. But may I be so bold, Mr. Arvin, as to inquire what keeps you here all day? Is the nature of your work so alluring that you can't tear yourself away from it?

ARVIN. I am leaving it forever.

MARY (*looks at him earnestly; is startled at the change*). Something has happened. Where is the light-hearted lover I left here only a few hours ago?

ARVIN. I am going away to find him.

MARY. And she—is she going with you? But I needn't ask that. A tragedy has fallen on your house, my friend. Tell me of it—if you can—if I can help.

ARVIN. No one can help, Mary. No one can mend a broken image.

MARY. O, if the parts be not missing. There are wonderfully clever doctors of broken statuary.

ARVIN. But it's never quite the same. And then, if the most important part is missing? Or if the shattered image was only an ideal—?

MARY. An ideal woman, for instance.

ARVIN. Why deny it to you?

MARY. You couldn't. I knew it the moment I saw your face. . . . Henry, it is a grave and a foolish error for a grown man to idealize a woman.

ARVIN. But if she comes to one as an ideal—with a golden aureole all about her?

MARY (*musingly*). She comes with her best foot forward naturally, and unconsciously. The aureole is in the magic spectacles—of course—(*earnestly*) But why take off the spectacles?

ARVIN. What if they are snatched from your eyes by fate?

MARY. Who officiated? Fate is powerless without man.

ARVIN. And with fate man is powerless.

MARY. That makes a good paradox but not a whole truth. What is dependent upon man is subordinate to him.

ARVIN. I used to think so.

MARY. It isn't a matter of thought, but of knowing.

ARVIN. Who knows anything?

MARY. No one who speaks, I grant you. But we can talk about things. I can know, for instance, that circumstances and events are non-intelligent forces.

ARVIN. Like the multiplication table—and to be changed as easily.

MARY. That's the foolishness of man, that he tries to change the multiplication table—instead of himself, the only thing he can change.

ARVIN. Can he rule what he cannot change?

MARY. He can rule whatever he can use. He rules sand and water, yet never changes them. Whatever lacks intelligence must be inferior to that which has intelligence. The greater can rule the lesser.

ARVIN. Ergo, fate having no intelligence, man is naturally its master—I suppose you would reason?

MARY. When he has intelligence enough to use fate, instead of being used by it—then is he its master.

ARVIN. So in the end it's a matter of intelligence?

MARY. Everything in the end is a matter of intelligence. Fate is only the insensate stream that joins things. Sail on and with that stream, or turn your millstones by it and all its terrible insensate power is yours. Try to breast it—

ARVIN. And the caverns of hell echo with ghoul-ish laughter.

MARY. Or other words to the same purport—yes.

ARVIN. It reasons well, Mary. But life is deeper than reason.

MARY. Or it would be shallow indeed.

ARVIN. And when we come to its personal application—

MARY. O, reason was never meant for home consumption. With it we are anxious to guide the lives of others. But our own lives are ruled from within, or from without—as we are Gods or puppets.

ARVIN *is silent. There is a pause.*

MARY. But tell me now, who officiated to tear off those magical spectacles?

ARVIN. Grane was here.

MARY. Grane—an ill omen. It argues badly.

ARVIN (*desperately, yet quietly*). She was his mistress.

MARY. Impossible! I don't believe it. (*Shudders*) O, horrors! how could you believe that? Not that (*walks the floor*) I know it isn't true.

ARVIN. I repelled it at first—violently. . . . But —it—is—true. He is the father of her child. She—
The door opens and BLAND enters.

BLAND. Pardon me—I thought—

ARVIN. I have nothing to say to you, sir.

MARY (*suddenly*). But I have. Won't you be seated? (*to ARVIN*) Go for awhile, please, and leave me with this person. I must see him now about things of great importance to me. His firm was my father's counsel. But you won't leave without seeing me? I shall wait here. You won't go away without saying good-bye—promise that. Come back in half an hour or so, won't you?

ARVIN (*willing to escape the presence of BLAND, and his muddled brain anxious to be alone*). Yes—I think I'll go out awhile. I'll look in again, but only to say good-bye. *Exit.*

MARY. I am Miss Lambson, the daughter of Lorenzo Lambson—you may recall the name? Your firm represented my father in his—difficulties.

BLAND. I am happy to know you, Miss Lambson. I recall the matter perfectly. The most honorable insolvency proceedings, I may say, that I have ever had the pleasure of witnessing. Your father legally might have saved quite a competency.

MARY. But that is all past now. You are closely associated with the firm?

BLAND. Very closely. I handle all their confidential matters, if I may so express it.

MARY (*bent on making herself agreeable*). So I understood. It is a very responsible, and—ah—rather delicate post, I believe.

BLAND (*impressively*). I handle a great many momentous issues, Miss Lambson.

MARY. Indeed. And this Relton estate—it is a very important case, is it not?

BLAND. The most important one on the probate docket in the entire West, I may say, involving something over eighteen million dollars.

MARY. Mr. Grane is the most favored claimant, I believe?

BLAND. He appears to be just at present, I am bound to admit. But many changes may occur before the final hearing in court is reached.

MARY. And in your professional capacity you have probably probed very deeply into Mr. Grane's life and his connections.

BLAND. My work is very thoro, Miss Lambson. Every step, almost, of his life is recorded. (*Secretly*) My collection of data concerning Mr. Grane makes a bulkier volume than the dictionary.

MARY. There is a young woman in his family?

BLAND. A Miss Sara Manning.

MARY. Are you acquainted with her?

BLAND. Not personally—but otherwise—her close connection—

MARY. You never have seen her?

BLAND. I think not, Miss Lambson.

MARY. Is there anything in her life—anything of a nature—

BLAND. Yes, in its nature quite shocking, as you suggest, Miss Lambson.

MARY (*alarmed—aside*). Can it be true? (*To BLAND, smiling*). Indeed—I suppose—it would not—bear repeating?

BLAND. Hardly, in public, Miss Lambson.

MARY. But among ourselves? I am very much interested in her—in quite a friendly way.

BLAND. A most unfortunate affair. You see, it is very uncertain whether her marriage some ten years ago in Chicago was legal. In fact, it is almost certain that it was not. A forged signature to the—

MARY (*with a sigh of relief and unable to repress her satisfaction*). Is that all?

BLAND. My dear Miss Lambson, how could there be anything worse? Think of the social ostracism—a wife without a name!

MARY (*her irony but illy concealed*). Horrible, horrible! But is there not a beautiful compensation lurking in it?

BLAND. Indeed?

MARY. Yes. She is also a wife without a husband.

BLAND. You are jesting, Miss Lambson. It is quite serious to the law.

MARY. Doesn't the law take itself too seriously?

BLAND (*pompously*). Its dignity must be upheld.

MARY. Even at the cost of a woman's name.

BLAND. The ends of justice must be conserved.

MARY. Regardless of human happiness.

BLAND (*patronizingly*). The law exists, Miss Lambson, to vouchsafe and protect human happiness.

MARY (*dryly*). So I notice, in this case, where under its benign provisions, the invalidity of a signature protects—protects—

BLAND. That is really the point of the case, Miss Lambson. How clearly you see it. The whole matter rests upon the signature. The person officiating is said to have represented and to have forged the signature of a well-known divine.

MARY. And a woman's character, then—shall we say character, or merely her reputation?

BLAND. In reference to a woman, I am sure you will agree with me, Miss Lambson, character and reputation can hardly be separated. We may say that they are synonymous.

MARY. I suppose so. And we may say then that under the protection of the law a woman's character depends upon the validity of another person's signature?

BLAND. Upon the circumstance of whether that signature is or is not valid. I would rather phrase it that way, Miss Lambson.

MARY. But either way—doesn't it seem a little hard on the woman?

BLAND. We must maintain the integrity of social

usage, I am sure. Society cannot consider the individual.

MARY. O, yes it can, and it does, whenever there is a chance to execrate and ostracize an individual woman. Society always has time to frown upon and degrade a woman. To smile upon or help a woman—ah, then it is that Society cannot stop to consider the individual.

BLAND. Possibly our customs are still a little mosaic in such matters.

MARY. Possibly!

BLAND. But you would not consider, seriously now—disregarding them?

MARY. Heaven forbid! But—was the husband's name Manning?

BLAND. No, Sanders, I believe. He was a wild young fellow—not at all bad at heart till he fell under the patronage of Grane. He left her three days after the ceremony, and I have not been able to trace him. Of course, our side has not been greatly interested in the affairs of Miss Manning—they are merely collateral.

MARY. When did Miss Manning resume her own name?

BLAND. That was after the death of her child—some eight or nine years ago.

MARY. I thank you very much, Mr.—

BLAND. Mr. Bland, Miss Lambson.

MARY. Mr. Bland. The information is of great interest to me.

BLAND. I am very glad to know that.

The conversation languishes. MARY turns away, seeking an excuse to dismiss him.

BLAND. I had hoped to speak with Mr. Arvin.

MARY. You will find him here in the morning, I suppose.

BLAND. Not again this afternoon?

MARY. I think he has gone for the day.

BLAND. Then I will be bidding you au revoir, Miss Lambson. I trust I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again.

MARY (*not over warmly*). I trust so. I will say good-afternoon, Mr. Bland.

BLAND *bows elaborately and departs.*

MARY. And that, I am sure, is the mole-hill out of which has grown the mountain that weighs so heavily on Henry. . . . The possible, probable, or even the positive absence of a small gold band on a certain finger! Why not a hole thru the cheek or a ring in the nose? The proper intoning of a certain formula of words—whether he who in-

toned them had or had not a parchment certificate—the will or the whim of even an unknown man—of such is compounded the purity of women! . . .

. . . But how, O how on earth did that grain of sand become such a mountain? My poor wits are clogged by the rubbish. . . . Well, now for a letter. (*Goes to typewriter and works. The telephone rings.*) O, what?—Mother fainted! Dear—yes, yes, at once. (*She goes quickly, forgetting everything else.*)

ARVIN *enters a moment later; looks around for MARY, then sits down at his desk to rest a moment without taking off his overcoat and gloves.*

HEAD (*appearing calmly*). You ought to think this over carefully—reason it out closely.

ARVIN. O, I can't reason now.

HEAD. Consider a moment. You have liberal views about these things. You have no respect for society's hypocritical standard of physical purity.

ARVIN. That is not the question.

HEAD. Are you sure it isn't? Suppose now she were Grane's widow, or his divorced wife. In either case she would have the world's approval as a good and pure woman.

ARVIN. But not my love! A woman who could consort with Grane—O, I can't reason about a thing like that! I can only feel (*taking off his gloves*).

HEAD. But why give way to your feelings? They are primitive. You are actually making a fetich of the marriage ring.

ARVIN (*hand to his forehead*). Keep still—keep still! I can't cope with you now.

HEART (*appearing on the other side, but speaking directly to HEAD*). Society's conventions have nothing to do with this. There is an individual standard of purity. That she was Grane's *mistress* does not count. Look at the man!

HEAD. Are you going to judge a man?

HEART. No. But I am going to choose my intimates.

HEAD. Not on a rational basis, I see.

HEART. On a basis higher and deeper than reason reaches. I can't tell you just why Grane's contact with a woman soils her, but I can tell you very positively that it does. It kills the ideal in her.

HEAD. What of that? She is still a woman.

HEART. But not a woman to love—only one to lust after.

HEAD. You are drawing fine distinctions.

HEART. No; it is you that refuse to distinguish between two such opposite words.

HEAD. Words—yes, mere words.

HEART. No, conditions—conditions that strengthen as intelligence increases and which reason cannot change.

HEAD. Love is sex attraction.

HEART. Love is more than that. Love is the ideal. When the ideal is gone, then even the colorless, unmoral force of sex-attraction sinks to lust.

HEAD. I can't see it.

HEART. But I can feel it. My ideal is gone. I turn to lust—

ARVIN (*rousing, vehemently*). No more of that. I have settled it forever. For the instant you tempted me. But the love that was—that is dead—the memory of it conquered you.

HEART (*abashed*). Well, I presented the only alternative that is tangible.

ARVIN. My God! you did. And the world is all tangible! But that would mean to relinquish entirely the ideal—to lose even the memory of a love that drew me from the coarseness to the core of life while it lasted. I can't let go of that! Let me keep it, tho all future paths lead thru the Vale of Tears. (*He is silent for a time.*)

HEAD (*approaches softly, leans over on the arm of ARVIN's chair and says to him*): Well, perhaps you were a little foolish about the money. You would have acquired it far more honestly and with much less harm to others than most wealth is acquired. A very modest sum—but enough for you. You have to live—eat, dress, a roof. You want a few books—

ARVIN. I want nothing so much as my own respect.

HEAD. That sounds well, but it doesn't mean much.

ARVIN. It means everything, when I do not listen to you—or to some other voice that is at once a part of me and apart from me.

HEAD. You might have escaped poverty.

HEART. He doesn't fear it—because he has no desire for riches.

HEAD. Yes; they go together—the fear of poverty and the desire for wealth.

HEART. Fear and desire are always inseparable.

HEAD. But how will he live?

HEART. O, he can graft a little. He has more intelligence than forty per cent of the population, say.

HEAD. That is modest—if you consider me.

ARVIN (*rousing again for an instant*). I have considered you entirely too much. I am going to disregard you now.

HEAD. He is in a heroic mood today.

HEART. Isn't there anything sacred to you?

HEAD. Yes—everything—and nothing—but no one thing more than another.

HEART. You lack the sense of color.

HEAD. And you see too many colors.

HEART. My eyes are open to all the colors of life.

ARVIN. It would be better if sometimes they were closed.

HEART. That may not be, unless we part company entirely.

ARVIN. You don't discriminate in the choice of colors.

HEART. That is beyond my province. I reflect and present the colors, and then must look to you for the choice of them.

ARVIN. You are a weakling.

HEART. I have only the strength I get from you.

ARVIN *relapses into silence again.*

HEAD. I am his real strength. Now how would he make his living without me? And it is time for him to think of that, for he will be about broke when he leaves here, unless he demands of Grane the money due.

HEART. Which of course he won't. He can live without Grane's money.

HEAD. Well, I suppose Grane would withhold it for breach of contract. (*Satirically*) There's the soup kitchen and the bread line.

HEART. They are for the unintelligent. He won't need them. With your help he can graft a little.

HEAD. He doesn't need to graft. There are other places he can get.

HEART. Yes—by crowding in over the heads of perhaps a dozen others who need the salary worse than he. Isn't that graft—to take what another needs more than you?

HEAD. The law doesn't call it graft.

HEART. If we lived by law we'd be a race of fiends. Men are better than their laws.

HEAD. Which isn't saying much for men or law.

HEART. No; for the whole scheme of modern life is graft.

HEAD. In which intelligence wins.

HEART. Of a certain order, yes. With some of your cunning we can ride on the backs of the forty per cent beneath him in strength of cunning.

HEAD. Push them aside, jostle the crowd, and seize the little he wants—I suppose you would say.

HEART. Yes; with a certain kind of intelligence one can always grab enough out of the common

fund—lay hold of a loaf of bread now and then as the great stream of bread flows from its half-starved producers to its over-glutted hoarders.

HEAD. But is that a more moral course than to take a lump sum like the one just offered and end the struggle for bread once and for all?

ARVIN (*rousing*). Perhaps it isn't; but one is self-defense, the other is self-contempt.

HEAD. More sounding phrases. But he is weak on reason today.

ARVIN (*pressing hand to forehead*). O, keep still, with your reason—reason—reason!

HEART. Reason is the harlot of the ages. She fawns upon and excuses everything that is hideous and lustful in civilization. She explains the sweat-shops and the vile tenements, she assents to the prison torture chambers and the gallows shadowing the churches, she approves child-labor, she builds systems and governments by which the strong tax to impoverishment the weak. Reason is bloodless, cruel, and blind. Those who have no light but reason end their lives in darkness.

HEAD. Would you rule reason out of life, then?

ARVIN (*rising to his feet*). No, not that. Its absence would be worse than its presence. . . . O, you have been not such a bad friend to me. I could not live in this world without you. But you take advantage of my weakness.

HEAD. The weakness of the master is always the strength of the slave.

ARVIN. And when I blindly follow you it is to open my eyes at the end of a cul de sac to bow before the shrine of the God Doubt.

HEAD. That is my office in your life, master—to lead to doubt. There you must take command. I can lead no further than doubt, for there the well-worn paths end, and I cannot walk on unfamiliar ground.

ARVIN. It is true. Reason leads but to doubt.

HEAD. And there men loiter.

HEART. There they grope and curse God, and go mad in the darkness. But I have a light to shed on that darkness—a radiance by which all might find their way—yet only lovers will open their hearts to it.

ARVIN. And then you lead them often enough into the red thick mists of lust.

HEART. Only when the master abdicates can the servant lead.

ARVIN. O! in all the world is there nothing to lean upon—no certain guide?

HEART. You are the guide, master.

ARVIN (*unheeding*). I thought that love was final

—in love I should find truth absolute! One could rest secure in love—I thought.

HEART. Love is but a glow, a flame. It's life and its color is from the wick. I am the flame that burns what oil is in the lamp. You, master, are the lamp and the wick.

ARVIN. Who pours the oil?

HEART. Ask reason.

ARVIN (*with a glance toward HEAD*). He is dumb.

HEART. My truth is hidden in symbols.

HEAD. I must speak in syllogisms.

ARVIN. And syllogism and symbolism alike lead only to confusion.

HEART. It is not their office to lead. They are but tools for the master who shall lead.

HEAD. That is true—we are the followers. Only the master can lead.

ARVIN. Who is the master?

HEART. Who knows himself to be.

ARVIN *sits at the table and remains deep in thought*.

HEART (*hovering near*). He is still leaning on the old love.

ARVIN. Ah, yes, the old love! O, time, what a snare you, too, are! The love of yesterday—of only an hour ago—and yet the old love. A thousand years old you seem. (*Goes to desk and takes down the violets.*) She sent them when the flame of love was pure. O, violets that “wake the memory of dead romances,” lend thy fragrance to my willing senses and waft me pictures of those hours when love beckoned from heights—when I forgot the form and saw but the dazzling sheen of her white soul!

HEART (*timidly*). Her soul is still white and pure. No harm can come to that.

HEAD. He is unreasonable there.

HEART. The form shadows the soul and blots it from view—that is the trouble. It is love's halo that makes the form transparent and reveals the soul. When the halo is gone—O, it's no use!

ARVIN (*puts back the violets*). Only memory is left. (*Goes toward door, pauses near it, his eyes closed*). And in the darkness how vivid are its images! Love peoples the invisible with her haloed form. Almost the garment of her spirit I touch!

SARA *enters softly while he is thus musing*.

ARVIN. How real the vision! Sara—(*she is now in his arms*). The vision fades—this is real! Sara, you here?

SARA. Something stronger than myself drew me. You have forgiven all? Love has conquered?

HEART *appears behind ARVIN, a wild, primitive gleam in his eyes*.

ARVIN (*embracing her fiercely*). There is nothing to forgive—nothing—nothing, woman! I could not live without you!

SARA (*startled, dismayed, perplexed—frees herself*). Henry!

HEART *seems to whisper to ARVIN, and then slowly disappears.*

ARVIN (*impetuously embracing her again*). Sara, I cannot live without you! (*She yields, struggling. He half carries her to the lounge.*)

SARA (*still amazed and perplexed, but something of his passion imbues her, and she does not struggle*). I am yours, Henry, wholly yours—and you are mine!

ARVIN *goes to the door and locks it as the Curtain falls.*

END OF ACT TWO

THE THIRD ACT

As the curtain rises ARVIN is sitting by the table thoughtful, moody, and silent, the telephone directory in his hand unopened.

SARA *is putting fresh water on the violets, then she does the same for the poppies on the table.*

ARVIN *catches her hand as she passes. She leans over and kisses his forehead. Finished with the flowers, she brings the stool from the fireplace and sits on it beside him. Casually she notices the calendar.*

SARA. Why, this is Washington's Birthday. You should not have been at the office today.

ARVIN. When I came I only meant to stay a few minutes.

SARA. And you have been here ever since?

ARVIN. Practically, since ten o'clock.

SARA (*looking at his watch*). It is after three—and you have had no luncheon?

ARVIN. I hadn't thought of that. This has been the most tremendous day of my life. . . . But it's all settled now, I suppose. Life has cast the die for me. How foolish for one to struggle. (*Opens telephone book*) There is one thing to do yet, and then we will leave here. (*Rings up*) Main eight three four, please.

HEART *appears discreetly, leering, and with most unpleasant look, much of which is reflected on ARVIN's countenance, and in his manner.*

SARA (*scanning his face anxiously*). I see something different in your face, Henry—something new to me in you.

ARVIN (*evading her eyes*). I am older—years older. (*To the 'phone*). This is Mr. Arvin talking. Yes—I recognize the voice. If you can come over at once I think we can arrange that matter—you understand? Yes, at the figure last named. Bring it with you—yes. Good-by (*Hangs up receiver*). We will go to Australia in the morning. There is a steamer leaving at sunrise.

SARA (*delighted, but greatly surprised*). Splendid, splendid! . . . But—are we leaving for good?

ARVIN. Yes.

SARA (*mystified and troubled at his evident lack of confidence in her*). But this is all so strange. You never spoke of going away before.

ARVIN (*bitterly*). I did not know—I mean—I only just decided to go. Do you hesitate?

SARA (*impulsively*). Hesitate to go with you, Henry! How could you ask it? . . . And yet—I do not understand. There is something strange and unreal about all this. (*She tries to look in his eyes; he evades her frank and questioning look*). You are changed, Henry—you are changed!

ARVIN (*slightly resentful*). All is changed since yesterday.

SARA (*sinking back*). Was my sin then so great?

ARVIN. It destroyed the ideal.

SARA (*deeply perplexed—appealingly*). Yet you took—

ARVIN (*despondently*). But the shell of it.

SARA (*thru her silent tears*). And you have not forgotten and forgiven?

ARVIN (*stolidly*). There is nothing to forgive—or forget—I suppose. . . . It puts a different phase on our lives—that's all.

SARA (*weeping silently; then with some indignation*). How often have we said to each other that

ideals should rest upon realities and not upon appearances? O, I fondly hoped that you—you, Henry—would be the last to judge a woman through the eyes of society!

ARVIN. And I thought you—but we can't talk of these things now. It is both too early and too late.

SARA. It never can be too late for us to understand each other.

ARVIN (*doggedly—in his eyes she is Grane's ex-mistress*). I suppose you are anxious about the marriage. We can—

SARA. Marriage! what ceremony—what ring—what law of man or God can weld us closer than we are . . . or bridge the gulf that is yawning between us?

ARVIN (*perplexed*). What is it then? Why do you hesitate?

SARA. What a world of despair lurks in that question. Henry—Henry—my God! we are drifting apart already!

ARVIN (*looks at his watch—tries to pacify her for the present*). I am sure it is not so bad as that. The world is a little different than I thought—that is all. We shall know each other better after a while.

. . . I am expecting a man on business in a minute. You are going with me in the morning, Sara?

SARA (*catching at a straw*). To the ends of the world—if you really want me?

ARVIN. I can't go without you. I can't accept life without you. I have tried—but I can't. . . . You must go and pack a few things—just hand luggage—we will take nothing else now. (*As she puts on her hat and he holds her wraps for her, he looks at her searchingly, yet covertly*). There is nothing in your home life that attracts you—makes you hesitate to leave?

SARA. Nothing. And everything to urge me to leave. I had no aim in life till you came into it—and only stayed on because Mrs. Grane was an invalid. I felt I owed her something—my mother's half sister—

ARVIN. It is better to say nothing to them at present. We can write later. (*Kisses her*) Now hurry off. If you are back in time we can spend the evening at the Cliff House.

SARA. Our last evening in San Francisco, Henry.

ARVIN. Yes.

She goes.

HEAD (*appearing*). She seems to have no hesitancy in leaving her child.

HEART. Never mind that now. It doesn't count with the present status of things. The money will be here in a moment. . . . She is a beautiful woman.

ARVIN (*peering into the fire*). She is a mystery.

HEAD. Every woman is a mystery to the man who loves her.

HEART. Don't talk of love now.

HEAD. O, love is anything and everything.

HEART. Not to him.

HEAD. It soon will be. The world is pulling him thru its knot-hole.

HEART. That will only rub off his outside corners. It won't change him.

HEAD. You are getting up in the sky again. I can't follow you.

HEART. Don't worry. We're not going very high just now.

HEAD. A good deal lower, I should say.

ARVIN (*rousing himself, as tho shaking off his invisible tormenters*). I can't understand her. Only in my own thought has she seemed to change. The same delicacy—the same depth and trueness—

HEART (*leering*). She was Grane's mistress.

HEAD. And she deserts her child readily.

ARVIN (*musings*). Is she acting? . . . Can she think that I still idealize her—or respect her—
(*The door opens and BLAND enters.*)

Be seated, sir.

BLAND (*looking around*). We are alone, I presume?

ARVIN (*turning key in door*). Entirely alone.

BLAND. I should like to look over the papers.

ARVIN (*brings papers from safe*). There.

BLAND (*turning them over on the table*). There is the forged death certificate of Sara Relton . . . the letter of Grane to her father just before his death. (*Reads, while ARVIN stands behind him at fire-place, HIS HEART in evidence with a greedy, sinister look, which communicates itself to ARVIN's face*). As I have often suspected, Sara Relton is probably alive, but I suppose only Grane knows where she is. Do you think he is aware of this letter?

ARVIN. I think he had an inventory of them by mail. He was to go over them in the morning with his attorneys.

BLAND. He will need his attorneys for another service. This letter alone proves the whole conspiracy. . . . And the marriage certificate of Sara Relton's parents. . . . All very damning evidence against Grane, but I am bound to say they don't strengthen the case of the English claimants. We shall have to be looking up Sara Relton—what, ah, her photograph (*holds it up*). You never saw any-one resembling that young lady, did you?

ARVIN *starts*.

HEAD (*appearing suddenly*). Keep still!

ARVIN *looks at photo, but remains silent.*

BLAND. Let's see. Yes—there's the date and the name. Taken at Chicago eight years ago—she was about eighteen then.

ARVIN *is greatly agitated, but says nothing. He is still behind BLAND.*

BLAND (*running over the papers again*). They are well worth the money—to either the heiress or the English claimants. She will probably never be found. Like Grane to have shipped her off to some unlikely place. The Relton estate is valued at eighteen million dollars, Mr. Arvin, and that is a very conservative estimate. I feel that you are doing a public service in this matter, sir. Mr. Grane is a dangerous man. He was a sort of partner once of Herbert Relton—but his claim to this estate rests upon a most gigantic conspiracy. And he did seem to have the upper hand in the matter. However, all that is now changed. With these proofs—we will probably proceed in his case at once. Now as to your honorarium, sir (*hands over a long envelope bulging with greenbacks*). It is in paper currency, sir. Unusual here, but easier to handle. I think you will find the count correct. Twenty thousand was the figure named—

ARVIN *clutches the package and nervously puts it in his inside coat pocket without counting it. His face is bloodless. He looks the criminal that he feels he is—and behind him is HIS HEART, whose look and manner is even worse than ARVIN'S.*

BLAND (*patronizingly*). I see very plainly, Mr. Arvin, that you are not accustomed to these financial transactions—if you will permit me to say so.

ARVIN (*his voice thick, speaking with difficulty*). Hardly.

BLAND. You must allow me to say, further, Mr. Arvin, that nearly all cases involving large sums—I may say all cases where there are millions at stake—are handled in this way. There is nothing unusual—ahem—I may say, nothing unethical, in this transaction.

ARVIN *silently unlocks the door.*

BLAND. I bid you a very good afternoon, Mr. Arvin.

Exit.

ARVIN *inclines his head, tries to speak, but his voice fails him, and when he has closed the door on BLAND he goes to the sink and drinks greedily.*

HIS ALTER EGOS *are close to him, but their faces and manner are normal, all the passion, craft, and sensuality heretofore suggested by them are now*

seen plainly in ARVIN's face and manner. He has assumed the reins and is treading with firm feet again—albeit on unfamiliar ground.

ARVIN. So she is the Relton heir! Eighteen millions! This isn't worth counting then (*tapping the envelope bulging from his pocket*). I have been a poor blind fool all these years—searching for the non-existent—hoping and striving for the impossible—chasing rainbows and dreaming of ideals as unsubstantial as desert mirages! But no more of that! Lost and barren years! Wealth and power are the world's only realities. In my heart I will build a shrine to them.

HEAD. Well, every man has his price, I suppose.

ARVIN. And when he's bought and paid for he may as well own it.

HEAD. I fear your worship of wealth will be inconstant. The past surely will rise up and clutch you.

ARVIN. I'll throttle it with lust.

HEART. The old ideals will not desert you so quickly.

ARVIN. I'll blot out the images with—eighteen million dollars.

HEAD. Too much money for one man. It will weigh on you.

ARVIN. Too much! Not enough. I'll double and treble it. I'll buy privileges from legislatures, from Congress—and have a steady stream of gold and power flowing to me.

HEART. (*to HEAD, aside*). He thinks he will get these millions—they will get him.

HEAD. That is always the case. Men never possess wealth. It possesses them.

HEART. It seems to have him already.

HEAD. Let us remonstrate with him.

HEART. You can't reach him now.

HEAD (*to ARVIN*). You can't use all that money. What will you do with it?

ARVIN. I'll rule and grind and enslave men with it. I'll build palaces of marble. I'll travel, buy pictures, yachts, women!

HEART. Don't forget the beautiful one you have. It is thru her that you will get these millions.

ARVIN. O, I'll remember nothing—no one! But she shall have her day. I'll build her a palace on Nob Hill, and London, Paris, and New York will be her playground. When she tires of me there will be princes and sovereigns at her feet.

HEAD. There will be a chance for you to lead the intellectual life you have longed for—with books and leisure at your command.

ARVIN. Yes. I'll have a library first of all.

HEART. And read less, I'm afraid.

ARVIN. That's true. Very little reading. I'll play the game of life as I find it. Men will fawn on me, not for what I am, but for what I have.

HEART. Why should you want any to fawn on you?

ARVIN. What else is there in life? I may tire of sheer lust.

HEAD. Adulation will sicken you quicker.

ARVIN. Come, none of your platitudes. Wealth is the word—wealth and luxury!

HEART. You are drunk of wealth already.

ARVIN. And if I am—it is the world's drunkenness. Who is there to deny me the full cup?

HEAD. You will find bitter dregs in it.

ARVIN. I have found those in every cup.

HEAD. Because you drink too deeply.

HEART. The dregs are in the bottom of the cup.

HEAD. But it is you who tip the cup for him. Time and again you have tipped it, till he has learned to need the dregs.

HEART. I but do as I am bid.

ARVIN. Well, I'll taste the dregs of this cup, too. Who or what on earth is there to mock me as I drink?

HEART (*timidly*). Love—perhaps—

ARVIN (*bitterly*). Love, you say! O, now I shall taste of love—the only love there is in the world. The fairest women of every clime shall be mine. I'll seek them out from the farthest corners—from the peasant homes and from the palaces of the rich—and buy their fondest smiles with the clink of gold!

HEAD. He is drunk.

HEART. He is money mad. It is your doing.

HEAD. Can't you see he is doing it himself?

ARVIN. O, wealth! I'll probe your every power for happiness. I'll learn the secret of your fascination for men. I'll find the god in you that men so devoutly worship. Every human lust and joy I'll taste and test!

HEART *is greatly pained at all this, as his face plainly shows.*

HEAD. You never worshipped wealth before.

ARVIN. No. This is no seeking of my own. I played with Life for other stakes, for delights more lasting, for joys keener. But Life's dice are loaded—his Argosies of wealth and luxury are poured into my lap, while with his other hand he shuts upon me the door of the ideal. I yield. I'll riot in the coarse sensations of the world—feed the flesh and know the lusts of wealth that men so hunger for! (*He is pacing*

the floor excitedly—stops and looks at his watch.) Why doesn't she come? I'm burning to tell her of her fortune—eighteen millions!

HEART. Every penny of which you would give to see the aureole again around her.

ARVIN. Ah, yes—and throw in all else of life and eternity—and even hope itself—and count it cheap—for an hour of the old love! . . . But why do you torture me? Why are you always yearning for the impossible? I but brook the inevitable—embrace life as I find it.

HEAD. Yes, it is unwise to worry about what might have been. We must look life in the face and accept the responsibilities imposed upon us.

ARVIN. Responsibilities!—that's the word. I thank you for it. The responsibilities of the rich. We are the guardians of the world's wealth—vice-regents of the Almighty. (*Mockingly*) Yes, yes—we must carry our heavy loads—our responsibilities! (*Looks at his watch again nervously. As he replaces it SARA enters with cabman carrying two satchels*). At last! (*He tips and dismisses cabman*).

SARA. We had to walk up all the way.

ARVIN. I forgot that confound elevator. I should have been downstairs waiting for you. But I haven't been able to think of anything except the wonderful tidings I have for you. What do you think they are?

SARA. I haven't the slightest idea. Let us sit down and talk about it calmly. You are flushed and feverish. What has happened? (*They sit in front of grate. He fetches the stool for her, which she prefers.*)

ARVIN. You are the heiress of the Relton millions!

SARA. Impossible!

ARVIN. It is true. I saw the absolute proof of it only a few minutes ago. You are the daughter of Herbert Relton—heiress of the entire estate. Think of it, Sara, think of it! Eighteen millions!

SARA. I can't think of it—it is hideous.

ARVIN. You can't mean that—why—

SARA. I shall not assume it. I don't want it.

ARVIN. Don't want it? Well, I can use it. Think what it will do for us. (*Regarding her with a puzzled air.*) What do you want, Sara?

SARA. Something in you that I seem to have lost. If I cannot find it, life itself I shall refuse.

ARVIN. I can't understand how you talk this way. . . . We shall not go to Australia now, tho I have plenty of money here (*displays the envelope, which falls, spilling its contents all around them. He stoops to gather up the bills.*)

SARA (*astonished*). Henry, where did all this come from? You do not carry such sums with you—and the banks are closed today—?

ARVIN. O, never mind now. This is nothing. Think of eighteen millions! (*He suddenly rises and tries to imbue her with some of his own madness.*) Sara, you will be a queen. You will have all the world at your feet. You can rule in any circle. You shall have palaces. Men and women will court you!

SARA. O, what madness has come over you, Henry? Is this your estimate of life—and of me?

ARVIN (*stoops to gather rest of bills*). I am taking life as I find it.

SARA. So Pilate said when the multitude demanded Barabas. And Judas said it. And every man who sells the truer joys of life for pieces of silver says it.

ARVIN. But what if the truer joys be wrenched from you and the pieces of silver flung in your lap?

SARA. I would scorn them—scorn life itself on those terms—and I do. I have been weak and have bowed to fate. I have taken life as I found it—a woman's duty, the world taught me. But I am tired of being a woman—a toy. I am going to be a human being. I shall look life in the face and decide for myself whether to take the best it offers me. I am going to accept life on my own terms—or reject it.

ARVIN (*peevishly*). Why do you talk like that?

SARA. Because the world is slipping from me—the world of love and happiness in which I have lived. I am groping again in a darkness that is blacker for the light that has been. Life strips me of all reason for living, and—

ARVIN. Wealth will buy us everything.

SARA. How can I hear *you* say that? It will buy nothing that one is not happier without. Not an instant of love can it buy—not all the wealth that you could stoop to pick up in million dollar bills would buy an instant of the love that we have lost so soon.

ARVIN (*unheeding—replacing bills in envelope*). I guess they are all there. Enough, anyway.

SARA. O, I was right when I trembled to reach out and touch the ideal. Lo! it has crumbled, and is fading away before my eyes!

ARVIN. Let us consider this thing seriously and sensibly, Sara. Now in the morning we will see the lawyers.

SARA (*by an effort calming herself*). Yes, let us talk seriously. We must understand each other now or never. While I understood you I trusted you blindly. Now I must know everything. Perhaps I shall not accept the terms of life—I must know what they are.

ARVIN. Why do you take things so tragically?

SARA. That is how I find them.

ARVIN. Why, there is no tragedy in this. It is just wealth—money—

SARA. There is always tragedy in money. It is the tragedy of life—whether to have it or to lack it.

ARVIN. Let us forget the tragedy. It will buy us many things if we use it.

SARA. Men never use wealth—it uses them. And what of use can it buy for those who are losing life's incentive?

ARVIN. O, if you are going to look at it that way! Life is the way you look at it. I am not so enamored of things, but I can't change them. (*Again he is wishing that he could—but he rallies and says*): Let us get what enjoyment we can out of life as it is.

SARA. I don't see things clearly, Henry—but life, as it presents itself to me now does not interest me. . . . This large sum of money—you did not have it yesterday—an hour ago, even?

ARVIN (*sullenly*). No—but what does it matter?

SARA. Perhaps very little—perhaps a great deal. I must know. Where, how, did you get it?

ARVIN. Of what importance is that? It is the first of your eighteen millions, let us say.

SARA. I shall never say that. How much is it?

ARVIN. O, about twenty thousand—a mere penny.

SARA. If it is honestly ours, then let us be content with it and go to Australia, as you planned—or to India, or Japan. Let us leave in the morning.

ARVIN. And forgo the eighteen millions! You are mad, Sara!

SARA. I cannot doubt it—quite mad. O, God! Henry, how mad I am when I look into your eyes that quail before me and no longer find there the man I loved. The love light is all gone—the golden light that enshrouded the old sorrows and opened vistas of new heavens—all gone! The lamp of our love is dark!

ARVIN. I don't deny that things are altered, Sara. Perhaps I too have groped and suffered some—I don't know—I can't remember. I can't think of that now. The present and future seem so different now. Let us settle these immediate things first.

SARA. And they have to do with money, it seems. Then tell me about this—

ARVIN. I suppose you are right. This twenty thousand is a trivial matter—but it's your money, anyway. And I'm not fool enough, or so afraid, that I must lie about it. Well, I sold some of Grane's secret papers for it—to the attorneys of the Relton English

heirs. It was in that transaction—just before you came in—turning over these secret foreign papers of Grane's—that we found the evidence of your title. It is positive, Sara. The estate is yours, beyond—

SARA (*amazed at the confession*). The Relton estate is of no interest to me, Henry. Let me understand this insistent matter first. You robbed your employer to obtain this money. That was the money you had planned for—and the reason why we were to go away?

ARVIN. O, if you put it that way—perhaps it was robbery—but you don't understand it—

SARA. I am listening.

ARVIN. Well, I accidentally discovered the nature of these papers this morning. They show a huge conspiracy of Grane's to disinherit you. He had no moral right to the documents. The ends of justice are better served by having them in the hands of disinterested parties. Grane is thoroly a rascal.

SARA. Then you think it entirely correct to steal secret papers from—

ARVIN. From a rascal.

HEART. Ask her about her relations with Grane.

ARVIN (*his head muddled. The actual sincerity of SARA confuses his guilt. He does not hear the prompting*). It is not like taking them from an honest man, or from one who had a moral right to them.

SARA. You are drawing distinctions of moral rights. Then is it moral to rob even a rascal, if he happen to be your employer and the opportunity to rob him is vouchsafed by his trust in you—and you rob him of that which you are accepting a salary for safeguarding? You didn't *sell* them to the officers of the law?

ARVIN. No. But why analyze it like that?

HEAD. She is accusing you when you should be accusing her.

ARVIN (*brushing away the thought*). I can't look at her and accuse her of anything.

SARA. And this is the moral code of the man to whom I had given my life?

ARVIN. There is no morality in business—(*then desperately*) nor anywhere else in life that I can find.

SARA (*wincing, but gathering her forces*). Perhaps this is my last word to you, Henry. We do not understand each other. You look upon the misfortune of my life as a crime, and tho I feel that your crime is rather more of an impulsive misfortune, it means that we are far apart in our views of life. It means that we have lost respect for each other. We have lost everything—love, confidence, respect—and you

prate of wealth to bridge that gulf! Life is overpowering me! And yet—O, hope dies hard! Perhaps we can yet float on the dark wild ocean of life together—perhaps—if not in happiness in peace. Shall we try? Are you willing, Henry?

ARVIN (*perplexed*). I thought you would view the matter sensibly, Sara.

SARA. Take back the money to the Relton lawyers. Then come to me with clean hands and we will go off somewhere and work together. I have a little. I am not dependent upon Grane. We will go to Australia—anywhere—

ARVIN. And leave the millions. But—Sara—(*he quails before her glance*).

SARA. Yes—yes—leave the very thought of millions—and all mention of them forever! Go at once, Henry. Go out in the air and think it all over. Perhaps you will not return—and it may be better so. I don't know—I can't think—and dare not hope.

(*He stands dazed and hesitating. She gathers his coat, hat, and gloves and brings them to him.*)

Go now, at once, Henry. Do not return except with your hands clean and your heart ready to accept me as I am—for what I am. We will share our poverty and our disgrace together—if you return. There is little reason why you should. The Relton millions never shall be mine. I don't ask you to return—but—I—shall—wait—here—awhile—

ARVIN. Sara—!

SARA. O, no more! no more now! Go—please—go at once.

She is on the point of collapsing, but holds herself until he has silently passed out, then she throws her arms on the table, buries her face in them, and sobs are heard as the curtain falls.

END OF ACT THREE

THE FOURTH ACT

As the Curtain rises MARY enters; goes at once to SARA and tries to comfort her.

MARY. Dear girl—I think I know—

SARA. O, Mary, I pray you never may know.

MARY. That is like you. Tho your heart is breaking you can mold a prayer in it for a friend. Well, I think your prayer will be answered, Sara, for it seems that my knowledge of life is destined to be vicarious. And perhaps that is well.

SARA. I am sure it is. . . . Do you know, Mary, I have seen the sun sink at midday!

MARY. Which being translated into prose, means that you have fixed your heart on a man and found him—only a man.

SARA. But why translate it? What is done is done.

MARY. What is done in error must be done over again.

SARA. Now it is you who are talking in metaphor.

MARY. This "moving Finger having writ" never did please me. I like the way he said it, but the sense of it is trivial, gloomy without sufficient cause, and not true.

SARA. Not true, Mary?

MARY. Tears wash out almost anything, I notice. And what they fail to erase, the wind, rain, and sun wash out.

SARA. The sun is gone from my life.

MARY. The sun doesn't move, Sara.

SARA *is silently weeping.*

MARY. Come, dear girl, don't try to wash out the old writing with your tears. Let it stand. We have pen and ink—

SARA. Ah, it is written in blood, Mary.

MARY. Very well—blood always was cheaper than ink. But write it in bitter tears or heart's blood, as you will, if the first writing be wrong write it over again—and again. . . . Now let us leave poetry and talk in plain prose. It is time we did.

SARA. Don't you like poetry, Mary? Grief has no other tongue.

MARY. That's the fault of grief—not its merit. Yes, I like poetry—in books—and in life when the current flows smoothly. But there's a time for poetry,

and another time for prose, and we never seem to know which is which. When people poetize their grief, I know they are reveling in it, drawing it in deep, hugging it to their souls.

SARA. You seem to think people love grief.

MARY. Indeed they do. Some people never are happy unless they are miserable.

SARA (*smiling thru her tears*). O, Mary—

MARY. But that's not you, Sara. You have the shadow of a cause for your grief, but I think it is only a shadow.

SARA. You are driving at something, Mary? I have no wits.

MARY. That's because you are living a one-act tragedy written by Life in poetic metre, and you can't read between the lines, or stop to analyze them, for the charm of the metre—the bitter-sweet charm, shall we say.

SARA. Does reason ever help one, Mary?

MARY. It might, if one used it in the right place.

SARA. But in grief—?

MARY. That's the time to use it, Sara. In joy, in love, reason is a fool. In grief—it might save many tears. But no, we use our reason to quell our joys, and when the avalanche falls, or the sun darkens on a clear day, at once we weep the "Sorry Scheme of Things entire," instead of looking about us and turning over the matter to see if the error is not ours instead of God's.

SARA. And if we find the error is ours, does that make it the easier to bear?

MARY. It may make it the easier to repair.

SARA. But suppose it is beyond repair?

MARY. Suppose it isn't—not so many things are as we suppose.

SARA. Your theories are beautiful Mary, but when Life leads you up against a hard, dull fact—

MARY. Turn it over—walk around it. You may find a vulnerable heel to it.

SARA. Your spirit leads me almost to hope.

MARY. Let it lead you all the way, Sara. . . . Tell me, is there nothing inexplicable in all this tragedy you are enjoying?

SARA (*grimly*). Enjoying—yes. Why, it is all inexplicable, Mary. There seems to be no reason, no sense at all to it—only a horrible reality.

MARY. Perhaps we can reason it out a little—I am not sure. One is not sure of anything sometimes.

SARA (*impulsively, with a vague hope*). I am sure you are the best friend I have in the whole world, Mary, the very best and dearest.



MARY. Yet I know so little about your life, Sara.

SARA. As I do of yours. We have taken each other on trust. There is nothing to tell in my life. It has been inexpressably dreary—a woman's life.

MARY. Do you like Mr. Grane very much?

SARA. It would be unkind to say how much I dislike him—why do you ask that?

MARY. But you are part of his family?

SARA. He was my guardian. His wife is my mother's sister. I have had no other home.

MARY. Are you sure of the relationship?

SARA. I have always understood, yes—but, O, you are not going to tell me that I am the Relton heiress?

. . . . Is that all?

MARY. I know nothing about that. What I am trying to find out is Grane's motive for slandering you.

SARA. O, he has told about that unfortunate chapter of my girlhood. Alas! that is not a slander. I have no reason to hide it—it is all true enough.

MARY. Tell me about it, Sara.

SARA. It seems such a small thing now—and so remote. I was married—or thought I was. He ran away almost the next day. Later it was found that the ceremony was not legal.

MARY. Was there a child?

SARA. It only lived a few months. Sometimes I have regretted that.

MARY. In all this there is nothing shameful—only a touch of chastening sorrow that the years have almost washed away.

SARA. So I felt. When love knocked again I opened my heart to him and let him enter. But he—he views it as the world would. In his eyes I am not the same woman.

MARY. I cannot think it.

SARA. But it is true.

MARY. I am sure it isn't true, Sara. If there is nothing else in your life, there are years of happiness yet for you.

SARA. Alas! no, Mary.

MARY. He loves you.

SARA. I used to think so. He is changed.

MARY. He still loves you.

SARA. Between us love is dead. In his eyes, this thing in my life you think so small, is a fatal defect. It killed his love—and woke a demon. And—O, how can I tell you? I have seen him in a different light.

MARY. You have seen him as one blind and deluded—as one who thinks there is a great shame in your life—

SARA. Yes—he sees shame in that.

MARY. No, Sara, he does not find shame in that. O, you lovers are the stupidest people! Couldn't either of you imagine that Grane had lied about you?

SARA. Why should he? What do you mean, Mary? O, tell me?

MARY. Grane did lie about you, most horribly—tho why I can't understand—unless you are the Relton heiress, and he wanted to keep you unprotected?

SARA. Yes, that is it—I am sure that is it. I am the Relton heiress, it seems—tho I hate the thought. Tell me all?

MARY. He told Henry Arvin that you were his mistress—that he was the father of your child, which he led him to believe was still living.

SARA. O! O! I see it now—O—

MARY. I don't believe Henry would have accepted it from him. Something else happened that seemed to confirm it.

SARA. I told him what Grane had said was true.

MARY. Not asking him what that was?

SARA. No—no!

MARY. And so you both walked blindly into his snare—readily, it seems. Love yearns for grief—and ever finds it.

SARA. You are right, Mary. We were blind. Love blinded us—then grief.

MARY. They are close kin.

SARA. O, I can see it all so plainly now—all—all—all! I could never tell you how much there is. . . . Mary, I owe you my life's happiness. I owe you love itself. (*Aside*) Will he return?

MARY. You owe me nothing, Sara. But I still owe you both a good scolding, I think. You were willing to think the worst of each other rather than use your wits and solve the problem that Life presented to you—the very first problem.

SARA. You can't scold me too hard, Mary. I deserve it all, and a good deal more than your tender heart will ever let you bestow. . . . But now I must think of something else. Shall I ever see him again? How can I find him?

MARY. Is it so serious as that? You parted in anger?

SARA. Not in anger—there was no room for that—but in pain—pain unutterable. He may not return. O, what shall I do? Dear, wise Mary, what shall I do to find him?

MARY. Stay right here and wait. He will return.

SARA. O, he may not. You don't know—

MARY. I know that you are the strongest force in his life, Sara, and that is enough. He has no choice but to return.

SARA. I almost feel that you are right. Dare I sit idle here and wait and trust?

MARY. That is all you can do now.

SARA. Alas! I am bewildered! If he should not come back—

MARY. That is not at all possible. I know.

SARA (*her arm about MARY*). How do you know so much, Mary?

MARY. Ah, your wits are awake at last. You should have asked me that before. Indeed, how do I know? Well, I wormed it out of him. You are not going to be jealous?

SARA. Never, never—(*looks at her very kindly, but closely; MARY reddens a trifle*). You too love him, Mary. Don't deny it. And I love you more because you do.

MARY (*half bitterly, but lightly*). Because *he* doesn't, you mean, Sara—

SARA (*protesting earnestly*). Mary—

MARY. No, you don't mean it—you're a true and real kind of girl—but it's true, none the less. . . . I will tell you—. We have been good friends in the office here. We have bantered each other a good deal, but there was a vein of sincerity beneath it, because—well, because he is that kind of a man. He has talked to me as he would to a sister—head and heart full of you all the time. We have talked just as two men, or two women, would—just as we are talking now.

SARA. Just as you and he often in the future shall talk.

MARY. No—that can't be. I know you mean it, Sara, but—but tell me about the Relton millions. Are they really yours?

SARA. If I want them, it seems—which I don't. I shall not touch them.

MARY (*admiringly*). Have you really the courage to do that?

SARA. Do you think it takes courage just to forego wealth? If you knew how little I cared for it—how I dread its narrowing ways. I have seen it, lived in it, and learned to fear it.

MARY. Ah, you have not had to work for bread—your own and an invalid mother's.

SARA (*feelingly*). Mary! But I know of that struggle. How could I not know of it? It is all around us. It is a harder struggle—

BLAND (*enters, accompanied by a stranger*). Ah, Miss Lambson, if you will pardon the intrusion. I hoped to find Mr. Grane here—or possibly Mr. Arvin.

SARA (*quickly, going to him*). Mr. Arvin went to

your office, I believe. Have you been there recently?

MARY (*introducing*). This is Mr. Bland—Miss Manning.

BLAND (*stares*). Miss Manning! (*Aside*) The photograph—the same, I am sure. I must compare them. (*To SARA*) Pardon me, did you say Mr. Arvin went to my office?

SARA. Yes. Quite recently.

BLAND. Then if you will excuse me, ladies, and permit Mr. Johnson—this is Mr. Johnson, ladies (*JOHNSON bows awkwardly*)—to remain here till I return, I will step over to the office and leave word for Mr. Arvin.

MARY. Certainly. Be seated, Mr. Johnson.

BLAND. I will return promptly. *Exit.*

MARY (*to JOHNSON, who is seated*). It seems quite unusual for so many people to be on duty on a holiday.

JOHNSON. We don't have no holidays at the Central Station, Miss.

MARY. O, you are from the Central Station?

JOHNSON. Yes, Miss.

MARY. On any particular business, might I inquire?

JOHNSON. I've come to call on Mr. Grane, Miss.

MARY. I'm his stenographer—if I could—?

JOHNSON. It's a personal matter between him and me, Miss.

MARY. O, personal, did you say?

JOHNSON (*ominously but guardedly*). Yes, strictly personal, Miss.

ARVIN *enters*.

SARA (*rushes to him*). Henry!

ARVIN (*rather coldly*). Word was left that I should find Mr. Bland here. My hands are still unclean.

SARA (*drawing him aside*). They never have been soiled, Henry. (*She takes both his hands.*) It has been a dreadful mistake.

ARVIN. What has?

SARA. Everything in the last few hours. We have lived thru a nightmare—but now we awake—love dawns on our lives again. Mary has unravelled it all. She has told me—

ARVIN (*perplexed*). What could she tell you that alters things?

SARA. What Mr. Grane said—

ARVIN. Why need she?

SARA. But it was all untrue, Henry—every word of it. The world has been tottering around us!

ARVIN. Untrue! I don't understand! I begged you to say it was a lie—I thought, I hoped, I prayed it was. But when I asked you—you said it was true.

Then the world did totter. I saw you in a different light—the halo was gone—I loathed you and yet loved you. O, I can't tell you! But it was all false—all false as hell?

SARA. Not a word of it was true. I thought he spoke of an old sorrow in my life—that was his threat. I saw him when he left you and he said he had told you all. I thought he could tell but the truth.

ARRIN. And the truth was? But I care not for that now. We have years of confidence before us. So that you were nothing to Grane—nothing to him!

SARA. Nothing! Nothing, Henry. I would have killed myself almost at the thought. I have loathed him. I can understand you now. You should have cursed me and driven me away as an unclean thing.

ARVIN. No more—not another word or thought of that, loved woman! How the world brightens again! We will quickly forget it all. Nothing now could happen to darken our lives. (*They are to left front near his desk.*)

HEAD (*appearing behind ARVIN and trying to whisper in his ear*). Don't be too sure. Everything can happen to you unless you know each other's lives.

HEART (*to HEAD*). He will not heed you now. (*To ARVIN he is about to speak, when the latter, tho oblivious of their actual presence, waves them aside. They disappear hurriedly.*)

ARVIN (*sees JOHNSON and recognizes him as a plain clothes policeman*). This stranger. I must speak to him at once. I must act quickly (*leaving SARA—to JOHNSON*). I am Mr. Grane's secretary. You are waiting for him, I believe? (*ARVIN has recovered himself entirely now. He shows decisiveness and alertness. Henceforth he commands the situations and dominates the scene.*)

JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

ARVIN (*whispering*). He will not be back. He has taken passage on the Alameda for Australia. He will go aboard early this evening. Wait for him at Spreckels' dock.

JOHNSON (*looking at ARVIN searchingly*). You are giving me the straight tip, sir?

ARVIN (*has gone to telephone*). Yes—he will sail in the morning.

JOHNSON (*winking to ARVIN*). I think not, sir. I'll be going right away. *Exit.*

BLAND *enters, stops and exchanges a few words with JOHNSON in doorway.*

ARVIN (*at telephone—he has already secured his number*). Mr. Grane—yes—this is Arvin—I must see you at once at the office. It is vital—to you. At once—yes. Good-bye.

BLAND (*shuts door after JOHNSON, turns and bows to ladies*). You see, ladies, I am promptitude itself. Ah, Mr. Arvin—you wished to see me, I believe.

ARVIN (*leaving telephone*). I did. Some other time will be better.

BLAND I am glad to hear you say that, sir, for I have a most important matter to take up with Miss Manning. (*Produces the photograph. They all examine it*). That is the photograph of Sara Relton, to whom belongs, beyond all peradventure of doubt, the entire Relton estate of something over eighteen million dollars according to the last appraisement. Miss Relton, I desire to be the first to offer you my sincere congratulations.

SARA (*shrinking*). Thank you—but I shall not—(*to ARVIN*). Do you wish it?

ARVIN. Not a penny of it. I am rich now beyond all my dreams of avarice.

SARA (*quietly*). I shall not claim the estate.

BLAND (*gasping*). Why—er—pardon me! You cannot mean?

ARVIN Yes. Exactly what she says.

BLAND. My dear sir—you don't mean—?

ARVIN (*directly to BLAND*). The situation is changed. I went to your office to return that money. But now it occurs to me to put it to another use. You will not mind?

BLAND. That sum is a mere bagatelle, Mr. Arvin. We will waste no time considering it—if you will pardon me. The young lady—your fiance—if I may presume?

ARVIN. Yes.

BLAND. We can establish her claim within thirty days. The English heirs will not care to contest further, I am sure. Our firm will handle the matter very expeditiously, I assure you—and at the usual five per cent, sir.

SARA (*appealingly*). There must be some way to escape this burden without publicity?

BLAND (*gasping*). Well—well—er—my dear young lady—of course the English heirs that our firm did represent—they will naturally inherit if you make no appearance in the case. But such a course—

ARVIN. That is probably the solution of the matter. You may consider that we have settled the point, Mr. Bland. (*Turns to SARA.*)

BLAND (*to MARY*). I beg pardon, Miss Lambson, but may I suggest that your friend is acting most extraordinarily. I should say now—ah—that she were not mentally sound in her views—that she were non compos mentis, as we sometimes say.

MARY. I suppose she isn't quite sane. She's in love, you know—that makes a difference.

BLAND. Decidedly, I should say—and yet—if I may—

MARY. But she is very determined. I have talked to her about it, and there is no use trying to move her. She will not inherit the estate.

BLAND. How extraordinary! most extraordinary thing I ever heard of! Can it really be true, Miss Lambson?

MARY. Absolutely true. You are coming in contact with extraordinary persons today, Mr. Bland.

BLAND. And do you—might I be so bold—do you share—ah—the young lady's strange—er—hallucination? That is, I mean, do you sympathize with her remarkable views?

MARY. I think she is right—for her—and very wise.

BLAND (*shrinking back*). Mad as a March hare! All mad here! (*Then a bright idea suggests itself.*) But think, how the possession of such wealth would rehabilitate the lady's social standing. That—er—old mistake in her life—

MARY. Quite true. The presence of eighteen millions would obliterate the absence of a ring on her third finger—is it the third finger, Mr. Bland?

BLAND. Assuredly, Miss Lambson.

MARY. The usages of society are not entirely unforgiving—I gather?

BLAND. There always may be exceptions. We must not underestimate the advantages of wealth in the social scale.

MARY. I presume not. But you may accept her word as final. She cares as little for the social scale as she does for the Relton millions.

BLAND. Most extraordinary!

ARVIN (*leaving SARA*). I am sure it can be arranged. (*To BLAND, drawing him aside, while SARA purposely engages MARY*) It is Miss Manning's wish to settle a yearly sum on Miss Lambson. But the source of the income must remain unknown. Couldn't it be arranged as an unexpected balance from her father's old estate—say a newly discovered stock certificate, or enhanced mining shares? Any way, so that it appears to be her own—just enough to place her beyond the need of the daily grind?

BLAND (*reflectively*). Why—yes—it can be done. It will be an interesting conspiracy, I am sure.

ARVIN. The ends of which will be entirely defeated should it become known to her, or her mother.

BLAND. You can rely on my discretion, Mr. Arvin.

Now, as to any wish of Miss Manning—remember the entire fortune is at her disposal.

ARVIN. But she doesn't want the entire estate and will not have it—

GRANE *enters suddenly and noisily; goes to ARVIN.*

ARVIN (*hurries to GRANE and whispers—while BLAND stares in surprise*). This is too bad—a moment too soon. The police. They have the foreign papers.

JOHNSON *enters ponderously but hurriedly; looks to BLAND and in response to his affirmative look moves to GRANE, who is mute and stolid.*

ARVIN (*interposing quickly*). Mr. Bland, you are evidently mistaken. This is not Mr. Grane!

BLAND. Why!—Why!—What can you mean?

ARVIN (*looking very fixedly at BLAND*). I repeat, sir, that you are entirely mistaken in this gentleman. (*BLAND and ARVIN stare at each other, the one questioningly and half in anger, the other trying to convey without words the fact that he is going to shelter GRANE from arrest. For a moment it is a duel. BLAND wavers, and tho he doesn't understand, he assents.*)

BLAND (*to JOHNSON, reluctantly but authoritative-ly*). Y-e-s—Mr. Arvin is right. This is not your man, sir.

ARVIN. Mr. Lawson, a patron of our firm.

JOHNSON *is at the door, doubtful. At a sign from BLAND he goes out.*

ARVIN. Mr. Lawson, I must speak with you at once. Mr. Bland, I will call at your office in the morning.

BLAND. (*aside*). Mad—all mad here. I will say good-afternoon, ladies (*bows—muttering as he goes to door*) Most extraordinary!

MARY (*opens door for him*). Extraordinary persons—as I told you.

ARVIN (*stops BLAND at door, looks at him meaningly*). There must be no reprisal in this. I speak in Miss Manning's name. It will be safe for Mr.—Lawson—to leave here in a few minutes? I must have your word—

BLAND (*looks at SARA, who has come partly toward the door—she returns a glance of entire sympathy with ARVIN's attitude*). It will be safe if he leaves the city at once.

ARVIN. I will answer for that. (*BLAND goes. Turns to GRANE*). Now we part with you, Mr. Grane.

GRANE (*perplexed, half cowed, but preparing to assert himself*). Look-a-here—what does all this mean?

ARVIN (*shortly*). The law is after you. I sold those

foreign papers to Holdt & Reech—

GRANE. You sneak!

ARVIN. Yes—it was a mean thing to do, but the slander you uttered brought to the surface in me the same kind of demon that is always uppermost in you.

GRANE. Hell, if they have the papers—

ARVIN. Now to business. I received twenty thousand dollars for my villainy (*takes envelope from his pocket*)—and am going to turn it over to you (*GRANE reaches for it*)—if you answer a few questions straight and square.

GRANE. What's your questions?

ARVIN. Is Miss Manning the daughter of Herbert Relton?

GRANE. Yes.

ARVIN. She relinquishes her claim—will not touch the estate. Do you gather that?

GRANE. Yes—she's queer.

ARVIN. That leaves her with nothing—does it?

GRANE. She has some S. P. stock in her own name. Her father left it when he went back to England.

ARVIN. In the safe?

GRANE. Yes.

ARVIN. Let me have it.

GRANE *goes to safe, opens it by combination, takes out several papers and puts them in his pocket.*

ARVIN (*to SARA, who shows the fatigue of the day and is about exhausted, leaning upon MARY*). The day's work is nearly over, Sara.

GRANE (*returns with the papers. ARVIN turns to him*). Here they are.

ARVIN (*looking them over*). What do they net?

GRANE. Twelve hundred, and four thousand.

ARVIN. Does she know of these?

GRANE. The twelve hundred—she uses that.

ARVIN. And you have lived on the other?

GRANE. I used it—but you don't think I lived on four thousand?

ARVIN. Probably not. You lived on graft.

GRANE. Who don't?

ARVIN (*looks pointedly at GRANE*). I can't answer you.

GRANE (*sullenly*). It's all graft.

ARVIN. Every man doesn't steal.

GRANE. Everyone that don't go down walks on the backs of them that does.

ARVIN. I can't deny it. (*Handing him the money*) Here's the price of my manhood and decency. I have promised that you would leave the city at once and not return. Go now, and quickly.

GRANE (*walks to door slowly, hesitating, his hand*

in his coat pocket; at door he stops and turns to ARVIN, giving him a certificate). Give this to my wife. It's S. P. stock—she'll need it.

ARVIN. You're not all bad (*Goes to door with him and shakes hands in parting, then comes down to his desk, where his ALTER EGOS appear*).

HEART. Nor is any man all good.

HEAD. Some are worse than others—that's all.

HEART. Some are better than others, you mean.

ARVIN *unheedingly at his desk—locks it, and then turns to the women, who have been putting on their wraps.*

HEAD. The day's work is over.

HEART. The master has found himself.

Both disappear.

ARVIN. Sara, my hands are clean.

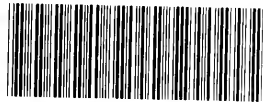
SARA. My heart is whole.

MARY. Love's miracle.

END OF THE PLAY



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